

DPR still plans Provo River parkway in Wasatch County

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By SONNI SCHWINN
Herald Correspondent

HEBER CITY — The Utah Division of Parks and Recreation (DPR) still plans to develop a multiple-use recreational corridor along the Provo River, between Jordanelle Dam and Deer Creek Reservoir, and a Wasatch County landowner's committee still hopes it will remain just a fishing stream.

Wasatch County Commissioner Moroni Besendorfer, chairman of the committee, reported last week that the CUP Completion Act provides \$110 million for environmental projects, including development of the river parkway, and the Bureau of Reclamation plans to buy all the property needed for access to river by Oct. 1, even if it has to be condemned.

The bureau is building the parkway with the federal funds, then will turn it over to DPR to manage. Although bureau officials indicate they would prefer to only rehabilitate the river fishery and limit activities to fishing, Dee Hansen, State Division of Natural Resources director, insists it wouldn't be worth it to police and maintain the corridor just for fishing. He has made it clear that if the parkway isn't opened up for multiple use, the state won't accept responsibility for it.

The consensus of the committee is that the river should be restored to the way it was 100 years ago, and left that way, and that no pri-

vate property should be taken. To compromise, they are asking for as little property as possible to be taken; for livestock to be allowed on the river enough to continue farm operations; and for use to be limited to fishing, or a minimum of additional activity.

They are also asking for the corridor to be left as natural as possible, with minimal access points.

They strongly object to the division's proposal to purchase enough riverfront property to create a fenced corridor as wide as 1,000 feet in some places. Farmers particularly object to potential plans to ban livestock from the corridor, because the river bisects several farms and the ban would mean they would not be able to move their animals from one side of their property to the other. The purpose would be to protect Deer Creek Reservoir water quality, which provides culinary water for the Wasatch Front.

"And yet they'll allow thousands of people to do anything they want in (the reservoir) on weekends, and up the river," observed Paul Probst, another member of the committee.

Emer Wilson, one of the farmers with land on both sides of the river who has been fighting the multiple use proposal since it was first announced 10 years ago, said he learned on recent tours of the streambeds with state and federal officials that extensive changes in

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the Provo River streambed are being planned to rehabilitate it to its original state as a prime fishery, which will include restoring the meandering, making the channel deeper and narrower, and rebuilding spawning beds.

The problem is that Jordanelle water would have to be sent down the river at up to 600 cubic feet per second (cfs) to accommodate all the downstream water rights, but the rehabilitated fishery would be destroyed if the flow isn't kept between 125 and 300 cfs.

Since a large pipe, at least six feet in diameter, will be installed in the foothills along the east side of the Heber Valley, to distribute Jordanelle irrigation water to a valley-wide sprinkling system, the obvious solution would be to divert water from the pipe to the Lake Creek, Spring Creek, Center Creek streambeds, to transport it

across the valley to Deer Creek Reservoir for use downstream, Wilson said.

In addition, Wilson said Jordanelle water would be taken all the way to Daniels Creek, on the north side of the valley, which will be reduced from a stream to a small creek because water will no longer be diverted into the channel from the Strawberry drainage. He said the North Fields, which now are naturally flooded and require no irrigation, will become dry when Jordanelle Dam blocks off the water, so water also would be transported across that area. And Besendorfer said a channel would be run along the north side of the valley to carry Jordanelle water to Midway for irrigation and then into Snake Creek.

"All those streams will become fisheries. We've got to realize when they're going to make a fish-

ery out of a creek, they will want the right for fishermen to go through your property," Wilson said. "They're asking for the same thing at Snake Creek, Lake Creek, Spring Creek, Center Creek, Daniels Creek, and the North Fields, as along the Provo."

Although they probably wouldn't be fully developed as parkways, Wilson said livestock would be banned from the streams. Many farms straddle the creeks and those operations would be seriously affected if livestock could not cross the streams.

Besendorfer said the bureau can exercise its power of eminent domain and condemn what it needs if necessary.

"It's tied in with the whole (Jordanelle) project. We've tried to fight it, and stop it. But we've never been able to get hold of an attorney yet that would tell us we could," said Besendorfer.

Wilson said he thought access along all the streams except the Provo could be acquired by buying property from willing sellers rather than condemnation.

There is a remote possibility that a corridor up to 2,000-foot wide could be taken to rehabilitate the Provo River. One proposed rehabilitation alternative would be to "remove all levees ... relocate levees outside of 1,000 to 2,000 feet wide in the stream corridor."

The levees are riprap that keep the riverbanks intact and would be

moved back so the river could just meander its own way through the widened channel.

"That's the one that would kill us...It would just wipe us out," said Besendorfer.

"There's a lot of money to be used, and it will be used, whether we like it or whether we don't," he said. "There will be willing sellers and the land is going to disappear..."

"I don't think each one of us can fight this alone. We need to pool our resources and put together whatever we need to do."

"We need to keep our tax base in place. We need to keep the impact as insignificant as we can in the county so it doesn't upset the livelihood and operation of ranchers," said Besendorfer.

Besendorfer said public input has become an important part of every CUP project and public hearings are required by the Completion Act. He said as he sits in the planning meetings, he notices officials are listening to the county's concerns, which they didn't do three years ago. He said they are aware of the landowner's committee and that has been a real plus.

However, committee members noted that it is common for government agencies to hold public hearings, record, study and respond to questions raised by the people, and then proceed as planned, without incorporating any of the ideas or solving any of the problems.

Provo River Corridor Recreation Plan Public Workshop and Open House

7-15-92

The public is invited to attend a public workshop to be held on July 28 at 7 p.m. at the Wasatch Middle School, 175 East 800 South, Heber City to identify issues, opportunities, and concerns related to the planning and development of a recreation corridor along the Provo River between the Jordanelle Dam and the Deer Creek Reservoir. The

public workshop is jointly sponsored by the Division of Parks and Recreation and Wasatch County.

For further information, please contact Paul E. Pratt, 801-355-8816 or Terry Green Division of Parks and Recreation, 1636 West North Temple, Salt Lake City, 801-538-7220.